

Geneva Diary:

Report from the GICHD

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining provides operational assistance to mine action programmes and operators, conducts research, and provides support to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.¹

by Ian Mansfield [GICHD]

A Study of Manual Mine Clearance

Manual mine clearance is the fundamental tenet of mine action and yet it has never been completely analyzed. To that end, the GICHD, at the request of the United Nations Mine Action Service, commenced a detailed study into manual mine clearance in late 2003. *The Study of Manual Mine Clearance* sought to define a set of parameters that affect the efficiency of manual mine clearance and use it to develop benchmarks or planning figures for manual mine clearance (clearance rates, costs, etc.). The study also examined in detail the drills, techniques, equipment and procedures used for manual mine clearance, and considered the risk-management approach to the process of manual mine clearance. The study was developed in five specific areas and each section forms a stand-alone publication that complements the others:

- History, summary and conclusions
- Management of manual mine clearance
- Operational systems in manual mine clearance: case studies and experimental trials
- Risk assessment and risk management of mined areas
- Costs of manual mine clearance

The study found today's "humanitarian demining" is much safer than the major military-supervised clearance work conducted after World War II. While the rate of manual mine clearance is affected by many factors, the study found that worldwide an individual deminer clears on average 15 to 20 square metres (18–24 square yards) per day. The estimated cost of manual mine clearance varies widely from \$0.60 to \$8.73 (U.S.) per square metre,² although every programme uses a different methodology to calculate costs. The study proposed a number

of new drills and techniques that would help improve the efficiency of manual demining. However, it found the greatest productivity gains could be made with improvement at the middle-management level, through better training and empowerment of middle managers to make on-site decisions. Finally, it recommends consideration of a risk-reduction approach when setting priorities in situations where clearance resources are limited.

The study was released in September 2005 to coincide with the UNMAS National Directors' meeting. A series of briefings and workshops will widely disseminate the findings of the study. Copies of the study can be obtained via the GICHD Web site (see contact information, left).

Ongoing Work at the GICHD

The GICHD continues to undertake a wide range of work on the use of dogs for mine detection. The International Mine Action Standards on mine-detecting dogs have been reviewed and the new draft documents are available on the Standards Web site (www.mineactionstandards.org). A study of MDD operations, consisting of four case studies, is available on the GICHD Web site, along with three new videos on the training of MDDs. Guidebooks on the training of dogs and on the use of Remote Explosive Scent Tracing have also been published.

The development of the IMAS is undertaken by the GICHD on behalf of UNMAS. In 2005, 32 of the existing 38 IMAS were reviewed and endorsed by the IMAS Review Board, which met in September. The latest IMAS are always posted on the Standards Web site; however, the GICHD has issued a new compact disc (*IMAS 2005*) and also a revised edition of the easy-to-use *Guide to IMAS*. The publications can be ordered for free through the GICHD Web site (see contact information). ♦

See "References and Endnotes," page 108



Ian Mansfield is operations director at the GICHD, and he is responsible for all operational, technical and research activities of the Centre. He is also responsible for analysing existing and potential areas of activity for the Centre, as well as all evaluation, assessment and consultancy activities. Mansfield holds a Master of Business Administration and a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

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Endnotes

1. *“Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.”* Ottawa, Canada. Sept. 18, 1997.
http://www.un.org/Depts/mine/UNDocs/ban_trty.htm. Accessed Nov. 7, 2005.
2. One square metre is approximately equivalent to 1.2 square yards.